10: d'Orleans--315-316 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 114

"With regard to the future of the Laotian race, it may be foretold with certainty that it is fated to have the same lot which it has itself meted out to the less [316] intelligent Kas; it will be conquered or subjected by some superior race. But the question will then arise whether it will have the force of character to lead a life of servitude, working like the negritos whom it has itself subjected; or whether it will fuse with its conquerors, or gradually disappear."

10: d'Orleans--356 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 114, 211, 622

"So far as the ethnography, the flora and the fauna of Laos are concerned, no better authority is to be had than the French naturalist, Henri Monhot, whose scientific missions were paid for with English money and who succumbed to an attack of fever at Luang Prabang on the 10th of November, 1861. A small monument erected to his memory by the Garnier Mission was restored by M. Pavie, and it is a whitewashed cenotaph upon which may be read in blue letters the inscription

H. MONHOT,
1890.

The site of this is a space which has been cleared in the woods which skirt the Nam Kane about an hour's march above Luang Prabang, Monhot having died in a village beyond this. The chief of a Leu village receives six piastres to keep the monument in order and collect insects, besides being the ballet-master and master of ceremonies in his native place."

10: d'Orleans--356-357 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 114, 136, 137

"The fauna of Indo-China has been studied in so much detail by the expeditions of Garnier, Monhot, Neis, Harmand, and others, that I cannot do better than refer the reader whom this subject may happen to interest, to the records of their researches; and with regard to the flora it is very varied, among the most interesting features of it being the beautiful parasite orchids, some rose and others yellow. The country is [357] very well wooded, too, and I have been able to bring back some forty specimens of wood, chief among which I may mention the teak, called the mai sok, which grows in large quantities on the banks of the Mekong, a few days above Luang Prabang, near Kiangsen, and below the city, near Paklay."

25: Brodrick--103-104 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 114

"I cannot pretend to talk with much experience of the Laos, for I did not stay long enough in the country to receive more than impressions, and it may be that had I stayed longer, my impressions [104] would not be so vivid, neither would this half-hidden paradise have seemed so paradisial."

/i/ PREFACE

All that we know of the origin of the peoples of the Thai race 114
and of their political and social evolution has formed the object of 101
laborious research and fragmentary studies which are set forth in works of which the reader will find a list at the end of this volume.

Taken all in all, our knowledge is quite limited, and the history of the Laotian populations is still rather obscure and little known if we compare it to that of the other races which inhabit the Indo-Chinese peninsula. We possess abundant documentation on the Annamese, the Chams and the Khmers, and on their migrations and conquests, their arts and industries and the monuments which they have erected throughout the ages. But we have a great deal less information regarding the tribes, some of which tradition represents as having come from the /ii/ southern provinces of China and the others from the Malayo-Polynesian archipelagos, and which fixed their habitat at an undetermined date in the territories which today we call French Laos and Siamese Laos.

The explorations of Mouhot, of Francis Garnier, of Doudart 114
de Lagrée and of the Pavie mission, and the labors of the École française d'Extrême-Orient as well as those of eminent Indianists and Sinologists, have largely cleared a terrain which was covered by a thick vegetation of legends and fabulous traditions and have provided precious data on the principal events of which Laos has been the theater since the time when the mythical epoch came to a close, that is to say since the second half of the fourteenth century.

No work of synthesis had, however, been undertaken to establish the connection between events and the chain of happenings since that time when the Thai races came out of legend to enter into history. There were many scattered works of high value on the language, religion, mores and social status of the Laotian tribes, and on the upheavals and political crises which so profoundly troubled these populations which were almost constantly torn by /iii/ dynastic struggles or at war with neighboring tribes. But there were no connections between these essential events, and the tie which binds them was often broken. A crepuscular veil, if not a dark night, enveloped the national life of the Laotian principalities and the chronology of their sovereigns for many periods.

In a word, there was no complete and precise account of the history of the country over which France has exercised a protectorate since 1893.

114 Fortunately, these gaps have now been filled by the work which M. Le Boulanger is publishing on the Laos of former days and the causes which resulted in our intervention in the upper basin of the Mékong at the end of the last century. His work is appearing at a most opportune moment, a time when Laos is being opened to the initiatives of colonization, a time when, thanks to the early works of general interest which were executed with a view towards its development, it is rapidly accelerating towards a brilliant future.

From an entirely different point of view, this study could not have appeared at a moment better calculated to help in solving the notorious question which has been the object of interminable controversy and is still topical: Is Laos a /iv/ protectorate, or is it a territory of French sovereignty, that is to say a colony in the strict sense?

M. Le Boulanger's book gives a very clear solution of the problem, at least as far as the kingdom of Luáng-Prabang is concerned. In support of his demonstration, the author uses peremptory arguments which leave no further question as to the political status of our possession of the Upper Mékong.

114 From the double point of view of history and of simple justice,
643* Luang-Prabang is unquestionably a protectorate governed by a sovereign who enjoys his title and privileges by virtue of imprescriptible rights which are supported by customs and traditions six centuries old. To claim, as do those who hold the opposite theory, that by the sole effect of our volition this sovereign was invested with the privileges of royalty for reasons of political opportuneness and that before our intervention he was only a regional chieftain who had nothing in common with a prince endowed with royal majesty, is to defend a thesis contrary to historical reality and, it should be noted in passing, contrary to the interests of France in this remote part of our Asiatic domain.

114 /v/ M. Le Boulanger's work should henceforth settle this point of
127 history and put an end to a debate which has lasted only too long and the continuation of which would only result in provoking offenses and misunderstandings of such a nature as to alienate the sentiments of one of the populations of Indo-China which is the most loyally attached to us.

Far from neglecting the works of historians who have preceded him in the study of a past which is still nebulous, the author quotes from them frequently either to support their doctrines and opinions by means of the latest discoveries of archeology and epigraphy, or

else to correct errors in date or situate in their true place events of 114
which the date had still been uncertain. 127

But M. Le Boulanger has not been content merely with taking his documentation from the numerous works on Laos which have already appeared. He has endeavored to supplement it by profiting with patient fervor from the Laotian manuscripts in the Royal Library of Luang-Prabang, the Annals of the Imperial Palace at Hué, the archives of the former kingdom of Bassac and the collections of the "Vajiravudh Library" in Bangkok.

It is therefore a sincere book and one of good faith /vi/ which 114
the author is presenting to the public. It will be consulted with profit by all those who have an interest in the expansion of our influence in the Far East. It will provide precious material for our future administrators, on whom falls the task of pursuing in Laos the work of August Pavie and his valiant companions, those apostles of French civilization who made possible the peaceful conquest of the country and the faithful loyalty of its inhabitants.

In its capital, Laos is preparing to erect a monument to the memory of Auguste Pavie, a glorious memory which, together with that of the Doudart de Lagrées, the Lamys, and the de Foucaulds, is one of the purest in our colonial epic.

M. Le Boulanger's work comes at an auspicious time for paying living and pious homage to the founder of French Laos.

J. Bosc,
Superior Resident of Laos.

/vii/ AUTHOR'S NOTE

The present study makes no pretensions to dissipating the thick 114
mist which veils and will long veil the past of Lan-Xang, as long as no one can divest the Laotian chronicles of their legends and chaotic improbabilities. It tends simply to find a connection between the chief events of long ago, events which have been found by laborious researchers in more or less obscure documents, and which have heretofore been consigned to overly rare and highly scattered works.

To all those whose assistance, in various capacities, has enabled me to pursue and complete my audacious enterprise despite many obstacles, I here express my keenest gratitude:

To Prince Phetsarath, for the inestimable /viii/ documentation and true collaboration which he, with the kindest possible zeal, gave me;

114 To Messrs. Jules Bosc and Louis Finot for their teaching, their advice and their kind encouragement;

To Messrs. Georges Coedès and Paul Vitry for their precious information.

The reader will pardon the errors of this modest compilation. Since the great Pavie who, by the "Conquest of hearts," gave this world to France, this is the first attempt at a chronology of the Laotian principalities.

P. L. B.

/1/ A HISTORY OF FRENCH LAOS

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> Privileged corner of the earth, where manners have retained an exquisite simplicity, so rare among Asiatics, whose dominant characteristic is duplicity. My affection quite naturally went out to the Laotian people, so gentle, so peaceable and so trusting, whom gaiety never abandons, even in the worst misfortunes.
>
> Captain Cupet, Mission Pavie
> (Vol. III, p. 220).

CHAPTER I

GEOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

131 The territory which is situated in the basin of the Mékong River and which is designated in the French Indo-Chinese Federation under the name of Laos, is included between 22° 30' and 13° 15' of north latitude and stretches from 97° 45' of longitude (the right bank of the Mekong) to 106° east of Paris.

Its political limits are: to the northeast Tonkin, to the north Chinese Yunnan, to the northwest /2/ the Anglo-Burmese State, to the west Siam, to the south Cambodia and to the east Annam.

131 654 Area. At present it is possible to give the colony's area only approximately. Any definite figure would run the risk of being incorrect, and indeed no complete triangulation has as yet been carried out. Laos, which is the last comer into the Indo-Chinese family and has neither sea frontiers, outlets nor an economic structure, is still isolated from the rest of the Union and is almost unknown outside the great valley of the Mekong. The labors of the officers of the Indo-

is today scattered throughout the Far East and Malaysia makes it possible to consider this hypothesis. We know that the present-day Indonesians preceded -- both in the southwest of the Asian continent and in Indonesia -- the arrival of populations bearing Mongoloid characteristics, such as the Chinese, Thaïs, Muongs, Mans, Annamites, Malays, etc., and that wherever these yellow populations have penetrated and settled the Indonesians have been dispossessed of the greater /15/ part of the territories which they originally occupied and have been forced back into remote and inaccessible regions where they still live today. These classical facts, of an ethnic, demographic and geographical order, agree with the results of the first methodical research by prehistoric anthropologists in Southeast Asia."

I L 174

It is therefore to be presumed that the first inhabitants of Laos had only very rudimentary tools and weapons at their disposition, that they lived in complete independence, that their evolution was excessively slow and that they underwent "contact with, the imprint of, and then the yoke of more intelligent and better armed neighbors who had a broader and less individual social organization." Thence arose crossings, metamorphoses, transformations and an intermingling of individuals which subsequently gave birth to intermediate sub-races and to distinct groups the characteristics or even the numbers of which are difficult to determine today, and whose present-day representatives, clinging to the sides of the mountains, "embody before our eyes the traditional type of the savage" with their swarthy skins, their straight noses, their non-slitted eyes, their huts, their arrows and their dialects which are "evidently /16/ related to the Malayo-Polynesian idioms" (1).

1. Cf. E. Chassigneux, Géographie physique, the first chapter of the "Indochine" published in 1929 under the direction of G. Maspero.

I L 172 114

Who, then, were the first invaders? In the absence of any vestiges which can be attributed to a period antedating the beginning of the Christian era, the answer to this question is still more difficult than the question of the first occupants. Formless ruins (or ruins of which it is usually impossible to determine the use, such as the "jars" of Tran-Ninh), crumbling statues and a few fragments of steles buried in the thick undergrowth -- such

I are the sole documents which have so far presented themselves to
L the sagacity of rare seekers who are charmed and disturbed by the
172 very mystery which enveloped them. In vain did the imagination --
114 and sometimes the picturesque imagination -- of a few Frenchmen among the first men who explored the country in the steps of Auguste Pavie, endeavor to use Laotian folklore to establish a kind of chronological classification of the races which successively populated the basin of the Mékong before the formation of the historically reconstructed political groupings. We cannot, without the risk of grave error, follow them in /17/ their hazardous hypotheses, the complete fragility of which has been demonstrated by the subsequent work of more expert historians (1).

I 1. Here nevertheless, as a curiosity, is the summary of the
L hypothesis formed by Dr. Lefèvre in the stimulating Ap-
174 pendix to his Voyage au Laos (Paris, Plon, 1898):
114 1. The first inhabitants of the peninsula, and the true aboriginals, were the Khas, an almost savage people without monuments and, so to speak, without any writing, who were driven back into the mountains by the successive invaders of their territory;

2. The Malays or Chams were the first colonists to come to Indo-China. They gradually succeeded in forming several principalities, the most important of which was the kingdom of Champa, comprising the whole coast from Tourane to Baria. A second Cham kingdom was founded in the basin of the Nam-Moun about 543 B.C.;

3. A century later there arrived 12,000 Brahmans coming from Benares with their leader Pra-Tong, the son of a king of Delhi. They struggled with the Chams, who were driven out of the basin of the Nam-Moun and came and founded the kingdom of Champassac (Bassac) whose capital was... Ventiane! (sic, p. 285). The Brahmans were the first ancestors of the Cambodians. They organized the conquered territory on the Hindu system and gave it the name of Krung (kingdom) Inthapat (of Indra). They founded Inthapataboury, the capital, to the south of the Dangrek, Saniaboury (Xania, victory; boury, city), Sakon-Lakon (Salaka, peace), Batanaboury (precious stones) and Souvanapoum (city of gold);

4. Under Açoka, emperor of "Burma" /"Birmanie"/

(sic, pp. 287 and 298; Dr. Lefevre does not seem to be aware of the fact that the emperor Açoka was one of the greatest sovereigns of Indian history), took place the arrival of the Kmers coming from Pegou and Hangsavadi, who settled in Cambodia and thus lessened the cast of Brahmans; I L 174 114

5. But the Tartars swept down from the north and leveled everything. They were followed by the Thaïs who came from Mongolia or Séchouen and spread to Siam, Laos, Burma, etc.;

6. To the east along the coast were the Annamites who came from Kouei-Tcheou and occupied all of the land between the Annamitic Chain and the sea.

/18/ Given the present state of our knowledge we may only suppose that "hardy navigators" (?) coming from the Malay Archipelago occupied the Indo-Chinese coasts several centuries before our era. They must have settled first on the thin strip of land between the Annamitic Chain and the sea, where they must subsequently have formed the powerful kingdom of Champa. Then they ventured into the basin of the Mékong and went up the river at least as far as the point where it is joined by the Nam-Moun, where they entered into conflict with the Khas. They were stronger, more intelligent and better organized, and drove these aboriginals back into the forests and mountains. They were then solidly established until the day when they encountered other men coming down from the northern regions, doubtless the Kmers or Cambodians (or their ancestors) who drove them back in their turn or absorbed them. The Chams and Kmers were strongly Hinduized, either because they were already Sivaites when they arrived in the country or because apostles of Buddhism later came to preach their faith /19/ and disseminate Indian culture in the southwest of the peninsula (1).

1. This theory of the "prehistoric" Chams, developed by E. Aymonier in his important work on Cambodia, has been strongly opposed by P. Pelliot who objects that no text has so far confirmed "any vague native traditions." -- Cf. "Deux itinéraires de Chine en Indes" (Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, 1904, Vol. IV, Nos. 1-2.)-- See, however, G. Ferrand who also believes that the Indianization of Cambodia and Champa must have begun

I about the fourth century B.C. Cf. Le Kouen-louen et les
L anciennes navigations, 1919, and L. Finot, Les origines de
174 la colonisation indienne en Indo-chine.
114

At the same time, "large junks carrying hundreds of men (from the northeast) could, we must presume, have introduced certain industries into Indo-China... then, starting in the third century B.C., the Tsins who were the real founders of Chinese power and had given the empire its practically final limits, began to think of a sort of universal domination and gave to their relations, which had become more active, a character of conquest and study of neighboring countries..." (2).

2. Cf. ibid. Contested by P. Pelliot who, in the same study, claims that "the great migrations of men from the north in centuries which antedate our era belong to fiction and not to history."

Thus in this remote epoch there was foreshadowed a division of the peninsula into two zones of /20/ civilization, such as we have already observed in the Indo-China of today: the Chinese zone which will extend over the Annamite territory (which ten centuries of submission will profoundly "sinify"); and the Indian zone which will include Champa and Cambodia with its future extensions into the basins of the Mékong and the Ménam.

I /21/ CHAPTER III
L THE HISTORICAL PERIOD. -- THE BEGINNINGS
174
127 The Annals of the various Laotian kingdoms of the Mékong basin, supported by precise written evidence, mention events which did not begin until just before the fourteenth century of our era. For the earlier period we have only a rather small number of traditions and local legends. Thus in order to establish certain historical facts and try to show the connection between them, we must have recourse to the chronicles of neighboring lands which are all too often obscure and fabulous themselves. A great many hypotheses on this, so to speak, medieval epoch have been formulated, all of which are both possible and questionable. It is by trying to classify them and by taking inspiration from those which seem to be the most likely that the following guiding points have been established:

643* driven out of their States, and succeeded as a conciliating suzerain
648* in restoring them to their rights.
175* It was under his reign that a rather unfortunate episode took place, one which was to be fraught with consequences for Lan-Xang and which is related in the Annamite chronicles. The relations which had heretofore been maintained with the descendants of the Giao-Chi had been highly courteous, and when the king of Annam Lê-Loi was attacked by a Chinese army in 1421 Lane-Kham-Dèng offered him a force of 30,000 warriors and a hundred elephants. Lê-Loi accepted with the keenest satisfaction, but scarcely had the reinforcements from Lan-Xang arrived on the spot when they betrayed their allies and went over to the Chinese. They gained nothing thereby, however, for the Annamites overthrew their enemies and brusquely escorted the soldiers of Lane-Kham-Dèng back to their own territory. Although he was lucky enough to escape from this wasps' nest, the king of Annam nevertheless felt a profound resentment at this betrayal. His successors inherited the grudge, and less than fifty years later one of them was to become the instigator of a widespread coalition to punish Lan-Xang.

/59/. NANG-KEO-PHIMPHA (1428-1438).

175* During the ten years which followed the death of Lane-Kham-
643* Dèng the harmony which presided over the destinies of the royal
562 dynasty was troubled by a cruel and authoritarian woman who was the actual governor under the ephemeral crowns of seven kings.

Nang-Keo-Phimpha was the eldest of the daughters of Sam-Sene-Thaï (1). The Annals are extremely discreet as regards this

114 1. Pavie's translators, led astray by copyists' errors, wrongly
643* make of Nang-Keo-Phimpha, whom they call Maha-Thévi
175* (Great-Queen), "the daughter of Fa-Ngoun's predecessor" and the first wife of Sam-Sène-Thaï. The predecessor of Fa-Ngoun, that is to say the latter's grandfather, died at an extremely advanced age in 1353. His daughter would then have been more than eighty years old at the time which concerns us, and this is not likely. From this initial error, aggravated by mistakes and omissions in calculating the Laotian cycles, there resulted an inextricable confusion in the chronology drawn up by Pavie's interpreters, who were Cambodians and did not know French. The present account, based on direct translations which are as faithful as possible

114 643* 175* and on cross checks between the Annals and family documents, is an attempt to reestablish the facts. The exact correspondence of the dates justifies us in thinking that it is as close to historical truth as possible.

175* 643* 562 ambitious princess and limit themselves to recording her crimes without explanation or comment. It may be that her intrigues had already brought Lane-Kham-Dèng to the throne in utter disregard of the eldest son's rights, or, on the other hand, she may have been impatient /60/ to see this younger son, who does not seem to have submitted to her influence and whose life she may have shortened, placed on the throne.

Phommathat, king 1428-1429. -- Pak-Houeï-Luong, king 1429. Thao-Sai, king 1430.

643* 175* 662 Whatever the case may be, she was discontented with her nephew Phommathat, the eldest son of Lane-Kham-Dèng, and had him deposed ten months after his accession to the throne, then slaughtered on the rock of Pha-Dieou at the mouth of the Nam-Khane. Then she gave the crown to her brother Kham-Teun, the fourth son of Sam-Sène-Thaï and governor of Pak-Houei-Luong, who reigned under this latter name. Five months later, however, Kham-Teun had ceased to please and was replaced with Thao-Sai, the third son of Sam-Sène-Thaï and of Nang-Keo-Yopha. Scarcely six months had passed when the king discovered a plot to assassinate him which had been fomented by his sister. At his wits' end, he chose to hang himself in the bath chamber of his palace.

Phaya-Khai, king 1430-1433. -- Xieng-Sai, king 1433-1434.

Then Nang-Keo-Phimpha let her choice fall on her nephew Gnou-Khone, the second son of Lane-Kham-Dèng, who was governor of the /61/ Muong of Xieng-Khai and who chose the name of his province as his reigning name. Phaya-Khai "lasted" for three years and then died at Pak-Khane, assassinated by the inhabitants on his aunt's orders. Khone-Keo, the son of Sam-Sène-Thaï and of Nang-One-Sa, succeeded him under the name of Xieng-Sa and died in the same way seven months later.

Third son of Lane-Kham-Dèng, king 1434-1435.

Lane-Kham-Dèng's third son (whose name is unknown) replaced him for a space of eight months. In order to escape his aunt's fury,

Frontier agreements with the neighboring kingdoms. In consequence of agreements reached with the princes of the peninsula, the frontiers of Lan-Xang were permanently fixed from Khone in the south to Pha-Day in the north, and from Siam in the west to Annam in the east. With this last country, to which Souligna had bound himself by taking one of King Le-duy-Ky's daughters as a concubine, it was agreed that all the people who lived in "houses on piles and with verandas" should be called subjects of the king of /342/ Vientiane, and that those who inhabited houses "without piles or verandas" should belong to Annam. 631 643* 175* 653

The stay of the Dutchman Van Wusthof in Vientiane (1641). In 1641 Vientiane was visited by the Dutch traveler Van Wusthof (2). /105/ The account which he has left of his stay in the 175* 114

2. A Jesuit, Father Jean-Marie Leria, had visited Vientiane before Van Wusthof and had returned to Annam by way of Hinboun and Vinh. Cf. G. Maspero, op. cit. /Un empire colonial francais: l'Indochine. Paris, 1929-1930./, and P. Martini, Relation de divers voyages curieux, published at Paris in 1666, "chez Sebastien Marbre-Cramoisy, imprimeur du Roy, rue Saint-Jacques, aux Cicognes."

capital of Lan-Xang contains precious information, even though it remains rather vague because of a lack of previous knowledge and of impartial observation (1). Thus Buddhism in Laos, for example,

1. Histoires singulieres qui se sont passees dans les royaumes du Cambodge et au pays du Laos, aux Indes orientales depuis l'annee 1635 jusqu'en l'annee 1664 avec le voyage des Neerlandais du Cambodge, en remontant la riviere de Laos, a Vinejan, la cour de S. M. le roi de Laos et enfin le cruel massacre qui a eu lieu au Cambodge par les Indiens en l'an 1643, published at Haarlem without any author's name and printed in 1669 by "Pieter Casteleyn, imprimeur demeurant au marche, dans la couronne imperiale." Cf. G. Maspero, op. cot. /Un empire colonial francais: l'Indochine. Paris, 1929-1930./

appeared to him as a crude "paganry," and the number of bonzes scandalized him, as did the morals of the gentle and sensual

175* inhabitants and especially the songs and laughter of the beautiful
114 girls bedecked with flowers. . . . It nevertheless follows from his re-
/771 marks that Lan-Xang was then the veritable holy land of Buddhism
792/ and that it possessed the most highly venerated sanctuaries where priests from Siam and Cambodia "came to spend ten or twelve days to study and receive their grades."

439 For a long time now the rich traders of Holland had been sending
175* ships into the waters of the Indian Ocean in search of cloves, /106/ nutmeg, pepper, silk goods, gold dust and porcelain. In 1641 the mother country had made settlements in Java, Sumatra, Borneo, the Celebes and the Moluccas, and its flag was known as far as the seas of China and Japan. Several mercantile establishments had sent out "sub-traders" from Batavia to Siam and to Cambodia. In July 1641 the governor general of Java, Van Diemen, ordered a mission which was operating in Pnom-Penh on behalf of the East India Company to send out a caravan to "the land of gum lac and benzoin." Under the direction of Van Wustof and his assistants William de Gover and Hubert Boudewinsz, the caravan entered the Mekong. The voyage was a long and difficult one, and often dangerous where rapids had to be passed. These men left Phom-Penh on July 20 and reached Vientiane on November 3 after 106 days of effort. They brought a good-sized packet of cloth and cottonstuffs, a casket of emeralds set in rings and small gifts such as brightly colored sampots (?), mirrors which closed like a book, etc. . . (1).

1. Cf. Cabaton, Le Laos et les Neerlandais au dix-septieme siecle (1913).

A few kilometers out of Vientiane a /107/ messenger from the king came to find out what the foreigners' intentions were and was shown a letter from Van Diemen to the "sovereign of Laos." He was fully satisfied and took them to the outskirts of the city to dwellings which had been prepared for them on the banks of the river. On the following day, November 4, the merchandise and gifts were unloaded. On the 5th the Dutch were received by the king "a quarter of an hour's
/576/ march away from the capital." They knelt down most humbly, their feet bare, striking the ground three times with their foreheads and holding a large candle in each hand, and were welcomed in a tumultuous camp of soldiers, horses and elephants caparisoned with

439 after a ten year reign without leaving any sons." He thus explicitly
643* contradicts the native documents which recount the many competitions
175* for the throne which had divided the royal family, and according to which the "present king" succeeded his uncle (Visai).

He adds that the government of the country was divided, under the
175* high authority of the king, between three great officials:
642
645 1. The head of the army who was "governor of the province which produces benzoin" and commander of the city of Vientiane. He doubtless refers to the prime minister Tian-Thala, the son-in-law of Souligna whom he calls Tevinia-Assen;

2. The governor of Nakhone or viceroy, who commanded the whole southern part of the kingdom, including Attopeu, as far as the Cambodian frontier. This was the Nan-Tharath of the Annals, whom he calls Lachaen;

3. The minister of the Palace who is in charge of relations with ambassadors.

These three high officials "were given /110/ an audience only every two or three months, unless there were some necessity or the king had them summoned expressly."

/693/ Next to the king there was a "tribunal in charge of civil and criminal affairs" which was composed of five of his relatives who had daily access to the sovereign.

/651 Finally, Van Wusthof estimates the king's income at "two piculs"
643/* per year of gum lac, benzoin and gold (1).

1. Cf. Georges Maspero, op. cit. /Un empire colonial francais: l'Indochine. Paris, 1929-1930./ A picul was equal to 61 kilograms.

175* The Account of Father Marini (1666). This evocation of the
114 Laotian kingdom in the seventeenth century does not differ appreciably, on the whole, from two travel accounts published in Italian at about the same time by the Jesuit fathers Martini (quoted p. 104, note 2) and Marini. A translation of the latter's accounts was placed on sale in Paris in 1666 (2). No matter how picturesque it may be in its

/127/ 2. Relation nouvelle et curieuse des royaumes de Tonquin et de Laos, traduite de l'italien du P. Marini Romain, par L.P.L.C.C. (F. Lecomte; cel.), a Paris, chez Gervais Clouzier, au Palais, sur les degres, en montant pour aller a

la Sainte-Chapelle, a la seconde boutique, a l'enseigne du Voyageur. 175* 114 /127/

naivete, the work /111/ does not have the ring of sincerity which constitutes the merit of the Dutch account. It was probably written from the reminiscences of Father J. M. Leria (1) and is of value

1. Father Giovanni-Maria Leria, a Piedmontese Jesuit, left Cambodia in April 1642 accompanied by some Cochinchinese neophytes with a caravan of Laotian traders who were returning to their country. He remained in Laos for five years "despite the opposition and the intrigues of the bonzes" and did not leave Vientiane until December 2, 1647. (Cf. Fr. Garnier, 1871, and Father Alex. de Rhodes, 1651.)

only as a document at second hand. It will nevertheless be of some interest to extract the following passages:

"In the East it (the kingdom of the 'Langiens') has the kingdom of Tonkin which stretches to the southwest towards Cochinchina, and further to the South that of Cambodia; in the southwest and the west the kingdom of Pegou; and in the north that of Ava and the province called U or Lu (2), and still further again to the north as 131 175*

2. See below, p. 176, note 1.

far as the frontiers which limit it in this direction, where there are certain peoples who are called Gnai. . . .

"Because of its fertility and because the things necessary to life are found there in abundance, the kingdom is so heavily populated that only a little while ago in the census which was taken of persons who were /112/ judged fit to serve the king at war and to bear arms, 500,000 were counted, not including the old people who are so numerous and so rubust that even of those who are a hundred years old a very large army might be formed for the defense of the kingdom if the need should arise... 421 433 161

"The chief city and the one in which the king ordinarily stays is situated in the middle of the kingdom, eighteen degrees toward our Arctic pole, and is called Langione. It has good moats and extremely high walls on one side, and on the other the great river to defend it against the undertakings of enemies. . . . The royal palace, the structure and symmetry of which are admirable, can 633 174 344

beyond comprehension. Only the British are triumphing." 648*

So greatly was this the case that Siam abandoned all ideas of 175*
using French support in order to check British mastery. In consequence it had to cede England its Malay provinces /218/ and seek compensations from Cambodia. This latter kingdom was in the process of becoming a vast Siamese province when events suddenly sprang up in Cochinchina which once again modified Bangkok's stubborn plans for extension towards the east.

Then followed, successively, the breaking off of diplomatic relations between Franch and Annam, the occupation of Tourane and Saigon by Admiral Rigault de Genouilly (1859), the capture of Mytho by Admiral Charner (1861), the capture of Bienhoa by Admiral Bonard (1862) and finally the peace treaty of June 5, 1862 which sanctioned the French conquests in the Cochinchinese delta.

This rapid page of history was heavy with consequences, then unsuspected, for Luang-Prabang, and transpired too far away from the thick Laotian forests to awaken any echo there. It was in the peaceful atmosphere of the smiling villages of the Upper Mekong that Henri Mouhot, who was the first to reveal the splendors of Angkor and the existence of the kingdom of Millions of Elephants to the western world, came to die in 1861 (1).

1. With the cooperation of various London geographical and 113
zoological societies Henri Mouhot, who was born at Montbeliard on May 15, 1826, organized an expedition to Indo-China for the purpose of pursuing studies in natural history, particularly in entomology and omithology. He visited Bangkok, Chantaboun, Ayuthya (1858), Oudong, Battambang and discovered the ruins of Angkor (1860), crossed the forest of the "King of Fire" in the north of Siam and died at Luang-Prabang on November 10, 1861. The account of his voyages, first published in the Tour du Monde, appeared in English in London, then in French in Paris in 1868 in the "Bibliotheque rose illustree" of the Hachette publishing house.

/219/ Voyage and death of Henri Mouhot in Luang-Prabang (1861).

Although this traveler did not have time to undertake as de- 114
tailed a study of the land as he had done for Siam and Cambodia, at least the few pages of his travel log -- the last pages -- which he devotes to the principality reflect the extremely keen impressions

114 which he felt during his stay in Laos, despite the somber presentiments which prevented him, as he admits, "from appreciating and enjoying things as formerly."

For three years he had been a tireless explorer of the Indo-Chinese brush, a prey to the fatigues, the miseries, the privations and the dangers of the sly and evil forest. A poor traveler, as he himself ingrenuously relates, he had sacrificed his family, his comfort and his health (and perhaps his life) "to the sole end of being useful to his fellow men, of discovering an unknown insect, plant or animal /220/ or verifying a latitude point in a remote region."

133 361 Leaving Bangkok on April 12, he reached Paklay on June 24 after crossing the terrible forest of the "King of Fire" for the second time and breathing "in the midst of an atmosphere of extreme stench, hot like a steam bath filled with putrid miasmas." Paklay was a great consolation to him. "A charming village," he wrote, "very rich, larger and more beautiful than any which I have so far encountered. The houses are elegant and spacious, and everything denotes an ease and well-being which I have since noted in all the localities where I have stopped. The Mekong is much wider there than the Menam at Bangkok, and it is with a noise like that of the sea and the impetuosity of a torrent that it cuts a path between high mountains which seem to have difficulty containing it in its bed. . . . The sight of this beautiful river had the same effect on me as meeting a friend, for I have long drunk of its waters. It is an old acquaintance, and has long cradled and tormented me. Now it flows majestic, full to the brim. . . it is a truly grandiose spectacle."

Dissuaded from going up the Mekong by the inhabitants, who feared that some mischance might befall him /221/ /Page 221 is devoted to an illustration: "The Mekong at Paklay."--Translator/ in the rapids, he resumed his journey on elephant back and reached Luang-Prabang on July 25. "A delicious little city," he noted, "which stretches over a space of a square mile and holds a population, not of 80,000 inhabitants as Mgr. Pallegoix says in his work on Siam, but of only seven or eight thousand. The site is charming, and the mountains which frame the city form a circular valley in the shape of an amphitheater nine miles wide which must once have been a closed basin. The countryside is extremely pretty and reminds one of the beautiful lakes of Como and Geneva.

132 "Were it not for the sun of the tropics which shines constantly on this valley, or if a gentle breeze tempered the overpowering heat which prevails there during the day, this spot would be a little paradise.

judgment which he pronounced in October 1858 on Siamese 533
music, in connection with a dramatic presentation at the 101
court of Bangkok: "Deafening music served as the overture to the play. The orchestra distinguished itself by a dreadful racket and a complete absence of harmony... the same musical phrase was played to us for five full hours by the clock, to the great content of the king and his courtesans. I can almost believe that the whole science of music in Siam is limited to this terrible melody, for the other presentations which I was condemned to attend elsewhere always used these unique and discordant notes."

He left Luang-Prabang on August 9 to continue his entomo- 000
logical research in the valley of the Nam-Khane. The fifteenth, "on a splendid night," he camped on the bank of the river, but no matter how "charming" the countryside seemed he felt "sad, pensive and unhappy." "I /227/ miss my native soil. I should like a little life. The continued solitude weighs on me."

On September 3 he reached the village of Na-Le where he killed a tigress and went on a rhinoceros hunt. He was recalled to Luang-Prabang on the 18th by an order of the "Senate" (he does not say why) and turned back on October 15, but after three days of march he had to stop for he was stricken by a violent access of fever. On the 29th he traced this supreme exclamation in the log of his route with a trembling hand: "Have pity on me, O my God!... ." On November 7 he fell into a coma which was intermittently broken by delerium, and on the 10th he passed away about seven o'clock in the evening.

His remains were buried on the following day, "in accordance 114
with the European ceremony," by his faithful servants Phrai and Dong. Three months later the latter brought back his collections, his effects and his papers, together with their account of their master's last moments, to the French consul in Bangkok (1).

1. Cf. the Ferdinand de Lanoye edition, published by Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1882.

Mouhot's tomb (1867). The pious homage deserved by this 000
precursor, this hardy pioneer who fell victim to his devotion to science, was paid to him in April 1867 by the leader of the expedition to explore the Mekong which was organized /228/ by Admiral

but since it was ill-informed itself on the true political status of regions included between Cordillere /253/ and Mekong it invited the Annamite government at the same time to formulate its claims in a precise and unquestionable manner. 648* 175*

Laborious and confused negotiations ensued at Bangkok. Solidly backed by Britain, Siam claimed that it was acting in good faith and that its only aim was to defend against the "Hos" those populations which had common factors of race, language and religion with it, while Annam asserted its rights of age-old suzerainty over principalities which had paid it a regular tribute ever since the seventeenth century and the farthest reaches of which beyond the mountains had, after the fall of Vientiane and at the express request of the native leaders, been converted into "Phus" and "Huyens" which were directly connected with the administrative divisions of the empire. Maps -- highly imaginative ones, moreover -- were produced on the one side and the other, one of them drawn up after the reconnaissance carried out by the British topographer MacCarthy in Upper Laos between 1883 and 1885, and another made by M. Deveria from information supplied by the court of Hue.

Creation of a French vice-consulate in Luang-Prabang (November 1885). In the face of these /253/ irreconcilable divergences, it was finally decided "to go and see" and the Siamese government consented to the establishment of a French vice-consulate in Luang-Prabang so that both parties might reach an on-the-spot agreement concerning the contested territories through their respective representatives. To occupy this position the French government designated an agent of the rarest merit whose personal action was to exert a profound influence on the course of events. This was Auguste Pavie (1).

1. Auguste Pavie was born at Dinan in 1847 and died in 1925 at his home La Raimbaudiere.

This good and simple man who "conquered hearts" for his country over a territorial area which was then practically unknown and which was larger than that of France, this "charmer of peoples" who was to die a minister plenipotentiary and grand officer of the Legion of Honor, had the most modest beginnings. Discharged in Cochinchina as a petty officer in the naval infantry, he entered the administrative branch of Posts and Telegraphs in 1868 and after the Franco-Prussian 114 175* 654

114 175* 654 War was placed in charge of the station at Kampot, a small Cambodian port on the Gulf of Siam. He soon learned how to gain the confidence of the natives and became passionately interested in studying the glorious past of the ancient Kmers. His enthusiasm determined /255/ Governor Le Myre de Vilers in 1880 to place him in charge of a mission for study and for the construction of a tele- /647 graph line between Pnom-Penh and Bangkok. For five years he explored Cambodia in all directions, brought back abundant documentation from his voyages and the beginnings of the first map of the land which he had crossed, then returned to France with thirteen young Cambodians for whom the future Colonial School /Ecole coloniale/ was created in Paris.

175* 654 His ardent desire, expressed many times to his superiors, to complete his first labors by means of methodical exploration of the Laotian regions and to go "in the direction of those northern peoples who had previously attracted Mouhot, Francis Garnier and de Carne" and more recently Drs. Harmand and Neis (1), gained him an

1. Upon his return from the Tonkin expedition in 1874 Dr. Harmand had been placed in charge of a scientific expedition to Indo-China. It was in the course of this mission, the account of which appeared in the Tour du Monde ("Le Laos et les populations sauvages de l'Indochine") that he explored, in 1877, Lower and Middle Laos from Bassac to Lakhone and from Lakhone to Hue, crossing the Kemmarat, exploring the Se-Bang-Hien and gaining Hue by way of the Se-Tchepone. He thus proved for the first time that it was possible to go from the banks of the Mekong to the shore of Annam.

P. Neis, a naval doctor who was also given a scientific mission in Lower Laos by the Ministry of Education in 1882, had been told by M. Le Myre de Vilers as he passed through Singapore of the more immediate interest which the exploration of the regions situated between Luang-Prabang and Tonkin would hold. Given further information by Dr. Harmand, who was then consul in Bangkok, he went up the Mekong and reached the plateau of Tran-Ninh, but the Ho incursions forced him back to Luang-Prabang where he stayed for eight months (1883) without being able to resume his eastward march. He had to content himself with returning to Bangkok by way of Xieng-Sen and Xieng-Mai.

648* 175* As soon as they met the two missions, British and French, set to work. Living side by side, after three months of the same kind of life their members were on terms "of cordial simplicity." Since they made the same maps they reached the same conclusions, and finally judged that the creation of a buffer state would only result in creating a permanent source of intrigues on their frontiers and a true den for rebels, pirates and highwaymen. The British government had the good sense to accept Scott's arguments and not to adhere blindly to its first claims. By the terms of the declaration of January 15, 1896, which was supplemented by that of April 8, 1904, it finally recognized the thalweg of the Mekong as the frontier between its Burmese possessions and French Laos. As a consequence the territory of Muong-
/334/ Sing was permanently awarded to us in March 1896.

Dissolution of the Pavie mission (August-September 1895). This happy state of agreement -- a prelude to the "Entente cordiale" -- was the last manifestation of August Pavie's activity in Indo-China. For the rest, his task had been accomplished, at least the one which he had set himself seven years before: "to make of Laos a French land" (1). If the task was not complete it was nonetheless "fertile

/114 654/ 1. The geographic results which were also achieved by Pavie and his colleagues were immense. The distance which they had covered in their journeys was more than 30,000 kilometers, and the area of the territories explored was about 675,000 square kilometers. Each member's explorations went into an atlas and ten volumes dealing with the ethnography, literature and natural history of the regions traversed. (See the bibliographic index at the end of the present work.)

in its means and great and beautiful in its results," and if there were errors to correct and gaps to fill Pavie was certainly not responsible for them. Moreover, he was also to be asked to remedy faults which he had not committed. The just claims which he had formulated both against Siam's interpretation of the treaty and against the treaty itself had, in fact, attracted the attention /335/ of his department. The latter being desirous of reaching an overall decision governing all questions relative to the frontiers which Indo-China and Siam had in common (Cambodia and Laos), it reopened negotiations in Paris and summoned Pavie to "illuminate" the talks which were to be begun

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(Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

Besides these major holidays there are a certain number of others which are more religious than secular in character and which fall in between the ones dealt with above.

In the course of the sixth month (April-May), for example, a religious holiday is celebrated in memory of the first leaders of the Buddhist religion.

At the end of the eleventh month, on a date which is fixed in accordance with the rites and which varies from one year to another, a celebration takes place in the pagodas in honor of the men who first introduced Buddhism into Indo-China.

[785]

Finally, after the twelfth month (November or December), comes the feast of penitence which applies to all the faithful. During a [174] kind of Lent which lasts for nine days, true believers must abstain from certain foods and from all sex relations.

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Since our establishment in Laos the province capitals and all the centers where Europeans live have celebrated the National Holiday on July 14 which the natives call Boun-Phi-Falang-Sète (Holiday of the French Genie) or, by onomatopoeia, Boun Ka-Tor-Yu-Yèt. [C. A. M. Translator's note. The latter term seems to be an approximation of the French Quatorze juillet ("July 14").]

MORES AND CUSTOMS

101

By reason of their diverse origins and the relations into which they have entered with neighboring peoples, as well as by the cross-breeding which has taken place, the races of Laos necessarily have characteristics, costumes, dwellings and, in a word, mores and customs which differ to a greater or less extent from one race to another (1).

(1) On this question of mores and customs we shall have recourse from time to time to a notice entitled Le Laos français which was written by the Superior Resident in Laos and based on reports and local monographs which were provided by our administrators and are in consequence authoritative.

[114]

If we have consistently reproduced here extracts from the above work, this is because they provide an admirable summation

[114] of what has been observed, and because no better expression of the facts could be hoped for.

THE THAI RACE

142 144 "Laotians. Of all the Thais, the Laotian is the one who has remained the purest, although he has a much higher proportion of Aryan blood than the other varieties, with the exception of the Lus. Fairly tall in stature, his hair cut short, elegant in his movements and more refined than all the other inhabitants of the land, he is the aristocratic type of Laos. His upbringing, his education, his religion and even his vices have a mark of distinction which make them stand out above those of his neighbors. An excellent boatman, 438 and a trader rather than a farmer, he is the one who seems the master 505 of the land, as much by virtue of his commercial aptitudes as by the 484 ease with which he ranges the country. Mounted on his long and narrow shaped pirogue, made in one piece of a tree trunk hollowed out by fire, he goes great distances to visit peoples of the most varied races [175] [Illustration] [176] [Blank page] [177] and serves as a link between all the human varieties which populate Laos. He is at home and at his ease everywhere, standing out clearly above all his countrymen in this respect.

[361] "The Laotian prefers to settle along navigable watercourses and [241] in proximity to plains of ricefields. He is glad to have his land [567] worked by mercenaries or by dependents of inferior race, and sometimes by slaves (at least before our arrival). He himself, with quite an extensive knowledge of the needs and resources of the other inhabitants of the land, particularly likes to traffic in all kinds of merchandise. He it is who goes to buy forest products and cereal grains on the spot from the mountainfolk or from sedentary farmers, and sells them cloth, salt, tobacco, earthenware, farming implemen [439] etc. in exchange. He it is who exports the products of Laos to neighboring countries and brings back the things which Laotian industr cannot produce. His business as a commercial traveler, which he likes and which gives him a good standard of living, occupies him for only a few months of the year but brings him into contact with all the neighboring peoples and also with the Europeans and Chinese in the Siamese, Annamite and Cochinchinese trading posts. Thence arises his veneer of civilization which strikes one at first glance.

149: Reinach--229 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

[313]

Crustaceans

136 The crayfish, the shrimp and the crab.

Mollusks

Mollusks are very numerous, and a few types are even peculiar to Laos. They include acephalans, lamellibranchiates, gastropods, etc., several of which are edible (1).

[114]

(1) A complete study of the mollusks of Laos was made by M. Pavie and Commander Morlet (their collections are to be seen in the Paris Museum).

Insects

Because of their great numbers and infinite variety, insects have a very interesting, or at least important, place in the fauna of Laos. Despite their small size and weak vocal organs as individuals, when evening comes their collective cries produce a noise which covers all others.

There is still a fine harvest for the entomologist to reap, even after Mouhot, who was the first to make studies of this type in Laos. Lepidoptera, coleoptera, hemiptera, diptera, arachnida--all the types are represented, in the form of many-colored butterflies, brilliant fireflies, hideous, foul-smelling bugs, hardy beetles, dangerous scorpions, scolopendra with a thousand feet, repulsive spiders which are huge and hairy, and finally indefatigable suctoria such as mosquitos, flies, gnats, etc.

825 There are only two types of useful insects. These are the coccus which produces crimson lake or stick-lac, and several kinds of bees which supply honey and wax.

The greater part of all this animal life which we have passed in review is used by the inhabitants of Laos for food and other needs. It also provides certain products in the form of animal remains which are the basis for either local or export trade. A list of these follows:

173 Deydier--1 H,B-3 (no date) 1952 AM1 Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

INTRODUCTION TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF LAOS

[2 blank page][3] PREFACE

114 The newcomer to Laos who wishes to interest himself in the country complains that he can find no work capable of satisfying his curiosity. However, many volumes have been published, but these are of unequal value, many being merely a confused collection about well-known places. Unfortunately, they are usually out of print or inaccessible. Having quoted the book by L. de Reinach, Le Laos, already rather old, and L'Histoire du Laos Français by P. Le Boulanger, one has about exhausted the serious works which are available without too much difficulty.

There exist, however, many well documented articles which provide a precious source of information. Unfortunately they are scattered in periodicals many of which had only a short life or have disappeared without leaving a trace.

121 For this reason, at the request of friends from Laos and France, we propose to write this modest introduction to the knowledge of Laos, based principally on the works of our predecessors, making 114 an effort to give the evidence of our research or of our personal experience whenever possible.

However, the speed with which we wish to complete this popular work on Laos has not allowed us to benefit from the results of studies now being made in France. Many points which remain obscure, particularly the origin of certain festivals, will be partially explained in these works. [4] Should one have waited for their publication, fortified with all the critical development of scientific studies? Our need to publish quickly an introductory manual to Laos has obliged us to ignore these works, after having taken the precaution to notify the reader.

Some may be surprised that we do not once mention the mountain people. We have done this intentionally, for these questions can be treated in another volume without affecting the plan of the present one. In any case, it would be desirable for these questions to be studied by an ethnologist.

114 Since the signature of the agreements attached to the general convention of July 19, 1949, the French School of the Far East [Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient, referred to by author as E.F.E.O. -- Translator] anxious to give fresh impetus to research on Laos and thanks to the benevolent understanding of the Royal Government,

has created a center for the study of Laos which will enable the country to be better known and better loved. From these works new elements will arise which will serve as a base for more detailed works which the reader can study to his advantage, while awaiting the publication of a new edition of this modest tract, whose only ambition is to increase the understanding of the habits, customs, and traditions of the Muong Lao. 114

May we express here our profound gratitude to His Royal Highness Prince Savang Vathana, heir to the throne, for the friendly interest he has ever shown in our work. We express our thanks to His Highness Boun Oum, Prince of Champassak, who has kindly pointed out to us monuments till now unknown. To L. L. E. E. Thao Kou Abhay, president of the King's Council and to Thao Nhouy Abhay, former minister, we are also indebted for certain information for which we are grateful. We thank Mr. Michaudel for the friendly and constant help he has given to the French School [5] of the Far East in Laos, and we also thank Mr. Malleret, director of this school, who has made useful suggestions. Finally, we express our thanks to Prince Souvanna Phouma and to the Princess for the consideration they have shown us on many occasions and for the encouragement they have given to this work. 122

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[7]

HISTORICAL SKETCH

"...Then, Phou Lan Xon, messenger of Phaya Then, king of the sky, took a red-hot iron and pierced the gourd. Immediately a crowd of men sprang forth. There were so many that the opening was not large enough to let them through, so larger openings were made with scissors." 173 563

Such is the origin of the two groups of people of Laos. The Khas, who came out of the opening made by the red-hot iron, were blackened by the cinders; the Thais, who came through holes made by scissors, kept their fair complexion.

However original, this charming legend is far from giving us precise information about the first inhabitants of Laos. As a famous scholar has already bitterly remarked, it is the beginnings about which we know the least. Alas, Laos is no exception to this rule. The historian who attempts to retrace the events which have occurred in this country from the origins to the 13th century, at which period documents with substantial proofs are available, finds himself in much the same position as an ant lost in a sieve. The holes are more 127

inverting the order of words. The negation bo is added. Is the gentleman home? is translated Tan you ban bo? Sometimes a single word contains a whole phrase:

mi = there are.
dai = it is possible.

Vocabulary. In addition to the pronunciation of sounds, one of the difficulties of the Laotian language is the distinction between noble language and popular language. The language is different when one addresses the bonzes, the high dignitaries, the king. There is a very rich concrete and abstract Laotian vocabulary which unfortunately is tending to go out of use. We have found in manuscripts Laotian words translating textually [78] abstract Pali words, but they have been gradually forgotten. The Laotians no longer read enough of their original texts. Cheap Siamese literature has invaded the country making the people abandon their own language.

One of the urgent tasks is to bring back the old Laotian texts into honor and to spread them abroad again among the public.

[79] LITERATURE AND MUSIC

In addition to the canonical religious literature already discussed, Laos possesses an important literary treasury. But as in Cambodia, Siam and Burma, this literature is anonymous. We are in the presence of epic texts of Indian origin, of legendary traditions, of apologues, of legal, moral or comic tales. There exist also novels, but as in French "romances" of the Middle Ages, they are by unknown authors. There is no equivalent in Laos of a Kalidasa or of a Li T'ai-po. No philosopher or dramatic author is known.

If the name of a French writer were mentioned whose manner is closest to that of Laotian authors, it would be that of Charles Perrault, and this in a word characterizes the type of Laotian literature. It excels in wonderful tales.

Literature of Indian Inspiration.

In addition to the Jatakas, Laos possesses at least two great texts of Indian origin. This is said under reservation of further discoveries, for in spite of the important work of Louis Finot, "Recherches sur la littérature laotienne," we are still far from knowing all the treasures of the Laos pagodas.

a) The Pancatantra. The first text is a collection of tales copied from the famous Indian Pancatantra. In the Middle Ages